



# Gilgameš and Enkidu



**A Dramatisation of Four Scenes**

**from the Epic of *Gilgameš***

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*(The text follows closely the literal translation by A. R. George but has been revised by Martin Worthington, in consultation with Patrick Boyde, in the interests of effective declamation in the theatre.)*

### Prelude

*(Tablet 1, 1-48)*

#### NARRATOR

The one who saw the Deep, the foundations of the land,  
who learned wise knowledge of all things.  
Gilgameš it was who saw the Deep, the foundations of the land,  
who learned all wisdom of all things.  
He saw what was secret and uncovered the hidden,  
he brought back tidings from before the Flood.  
He came a distant road and in his weariness found rest,  
he wrote down all his labours on a tablet of stone.

He built the wall of Uruk, the Sheepfold,  
and of Eanna, the holy temple, the pure storehouse.  
See its wall, like strands of thick cord,  
behold its parapet of which none can make the like!  
Climb the stairway, there since ancient times,  
and draw near to the temple Eanna, seat of Ištar,  
whose likeness no later king nor man can make.  
Go up on the wall of Uruk and walk around,  
look upon the raft of its foundation, examine the courses of its brick!  
See if the bricks are not truly fired in the kiln,  
and if the foundations were not laid by the Seven Sages!  
One square mile is city, another is date-grove,  
one square mile is clay-pit, and half is the temple of Ištar:  
three square miles and a half is the size of Uruk.

Find the tablet-box of cedar, release its clasps of bronze!  
Raise the lid from its secret, lift up the tablet of lapis lazuli  
and read out all the adventures of Gilgameš, all his sufferings!

Surpassing all kings, renowned, mighty in frame,  
a hero born in Uruk, a wild bull strong to charge!  
Marching at the forefront, he was the leader,  
marching at the rear, he was his brothers' trust!  
A mighty embankment, protection of his troops,  
a towering flood-wave, crushing walls of stone!

Wild bull, the son of Lugalbanda,  
Gilgameš, perfect in strength,  
    nursed at the breast of Ninsun, the great goddess.  
Gilgameš tall and perfect, inspiring fear,  
    who opened the mountain passes,  
    and dug wells on the flanks of the hills,  
who traversed the ocean as far as the rising sun;  
    and scoured the four quarters of the earth in quest of eternal life,  
    and by his strength reached Ūta-napišī, the Far-Away;  
who restored the temples that the Flood destroyed,  
    and laid down sacraments for human kind!  
Who can compare with him in kingliness,  
    and say like Gilgameš,  
    “‘It is I who am king’”?

Gilgameš was his name from the day he was born,  
two-thirds a god, but one third man.

## Scene One

### The Creation of Enkidu

*(Tablet I, 63-78; 94-121; 167-221; 226-73; 299-300; Tablet II, 111-15)*

#### NARRATOR

He strides about in the sheepfold of Uruk,  
lording it like a wild bull, his head held high.  
The men of Uruk are greatly angered,  
for Gilgameš exempts no man from the army,  
And he who is shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold, Gilgameš,  
deflowers the maidens before they are wed.  
The women of Uruk rebelled at his iniquities,  
and to the goddesses they took their complaint.

#### WOMEN OF URUK

Powerful, noble, and clever though he be,  
Gilgameš allows no bride to go unsullied to her groom.

#### NARRATOR

The goddesses gave ear  
to the complaint of the warrior's daughter,  
the young man's bride.  
They summoned Aruru, the great Mother.

#### GODDESSES

You, O Aruru, who created human kind:  
now create us a double for Gilgameš,  
one to withstand the storm in his heart.  
Let each balance other, so that Uruk may find peace.

#### NARRATOR

Aruru washed her hands,  
took a handful of clay, and threw it down into the wild.  
In the wild she created Enkidu, the hero,  
born into silence, knit strong by Ninurta.  
All his body is matted with hair,  
his tresses are long as a woman's.  
The locks of his hair grow as thickly as ears of corn;  
he knows no family, nor even a native land.  
He was as naked as the wild beasts,  
he grazed with gazelles.  
Jostling at the water-hole with animals,  
alongside the herd he gladdened his heart with water.

One day, a hunter, a trapper of beasts,  
came face to face with him by the water-hole  
The hunter saw him and his features froze;  
Enkidu and his herds returned to their lair.  
The hunter was troubled; he stood still, he fell silent,  
his mood was sorrowful, his face grew dark.

There was sorrow in his heart;  
haggard, he looked like a traveller from afar.  
The same thing happened on the second day,  
and on the third.  
Back came the hunter, leading Šamhat the harlot:  
they set out on the road, they started the journey.  
On the third day they reached the place;  
hunter and harlot sat down to wait.  
One day, two days, they sat by the water-hole,  
then the herd arrived to drink.  
The animals came, they gladdened their hearts with water,  
and Enkidu came himself, whose birthplace was the hills.  
Feeding on the grass by the gazelles,  
jostling at the water-hole with the herd,  
he gladdened his heart with water together with the beasts.  
Then Šamhat saw him, this primordial being,  
this murderous creature from the midst of the wild.

#### HUNTER

This is he, Šamhat! Uncover your breasts;  
bare your sex so he may know your delights!  
Do not show fear, breathe in his scent!  
He will see you and come close.  
Spread your clothing so he may lie on you;  
treat the man to the work of a woman!  
Let your love caress and enfold him,  
so that the herd he grew up in will no longer know him.

#### NARRATOR

Šamhat loosened her robe,  
she bared her sex and he knew her delights.  
She showed no fear, she breathed in his scent;  
she spread her clothing and he lay upon her.  
She treated the man to the work of a woman,  
her love caressed and embraced him.  
For six days Enkidu remained hard,  
and seven nights he coupled with Šamhat.

When he had slaked himself with her delights,  
he turned his face towards his herd.  
The gazelles saw Enkidu and started to run,  
the animals of the wild bounded away.  
Enkidu had defiled his body so pure,  
his legs stood still, though his herd was in flight.  
His strength had shrunk,  
his running was not as before,  
But now he had reason,  
his understanding was enlarged.  
He returned and sat at the harlot's feet,  
watching her, observing her features.  
Then his ears understood what the harlot was saying,  
as she said to him, to Enkidu:

ŠAMHAT

You are handsome, Enkidu, you are just like a god,  
why do you roam the wild with the beasts?  
Come, I will lead you to Uruk, the Sheepfold,  
to the sacred temple, the dwelling of Anu and Ištar,  
where Gilgameš is perfect in strength,  
and lords it over men like a wild bull.

NARRATOR

She spoke to him and what she said found favour;  
his heart, now wise, was seeking a friend.  
Enkidu said to her, to the harlot:

ENKIDU

Come, Šamhat, take me to the sacred temple,  
the holy dwelling of Anu and Ištar,  
where Gilgameš is perfect in strength,  
and lords it over men like a wild bull!  
I will challenge him, I am the mightiest.

ŠAMHAT

Go, Enkidu, to Uruk, the Sheepfold,  
where the young men are girt with wide belts.  
Every day a festival is held,  
where the drums are ceaselessly beaten,  
and the harlots are comely of figure,  
graced with charm, full of joy.  
The nobles are roused from their beds at night!  
O Enkidu, you do not yet know life,  
I will show you Gilgameš, the man so blithe,  
look at him, and mark his face!  
He is fair in manhood and grave in bearing,  
his whole person arouses desire.  
His strength is mightier than yours,  
he needs no sleep, by day or by night.

O Enkidu, cast aside your sinful intent,  
Gilgameš is loved by Šamaš.  
Anu, Enlil and Ea broadened his wisdom;  
before you came down from the hills,  
Gilgameš in Uruk had dreamed of you.  
Gilgameš arose to have his dream interpreted,  
saying to Ninsun, his mother:

GILGAMEŠ

O mother, in the dream I saw last night,  
the stars of the heavens appeared before me,  
falling towards me like meteors.  
I took hold of a fallen boulder,  
but it was too much for me,  
I strove to move it,  
but I could not make it stir.

The people of Uruk were standing round the stone,  
the land had gathered about it.  
A crowd was pressing in to see,  
the menfolk thronging around.  
They were kissing its feet like a baby's.  
I embraced the stone, caressed it like a wife,  
I heaved it high and set it down at your feet,  
and you, you made it my equal.

ŠAMHAT

The mother of Gilgameš is wise, discerning, and knows all things;  
she spoke to her son.  
Ninsun is wise, discerning, and knows all things;  
she spoke to Gilgameš:

NINSUN

A mighty companion will come to you, the saviour of his friend:  
he is the strongest in the land, he has might,  
he is as mighty as a meteor.  
You will love him like a wife, caressing and embracing him,  
he, in his strength, will often save you.  
Of good omen was your dream!

NARRATOR

Šamhat told Enkidu the dreams of Gilgameš,  
Then once again the two of them made love.

In Uruk, the Sheepfold,  
Enkidu barred the doorway of a wedding house,  
thwarting the entry of Gilgameš.  
Either seized other in the doorway of the house,  
they locked in combat on the street,  
the Main-Street-of-the-Land.  
Doorposts shook, the wall quaked.

NOTE. There follows a lacuna, so a few lines will be inserted here (adapted from elsewhere and/or freely invented) to complete the episode and prepare for Scene Two. As a result of the struggle the hero and his double become firm friends and Gilgameš ceases to act the tyrant or to exercise his droit de seigneur.

## Scene Two

### The Fight with Humbaba

*(Tablet III, 21-128; Tablet IV, 1-4; Tablet V, 85-94; 135-44; 151-55; 175-86; 262-65)*

NARRATOR

Gilgameš arose and entered the presence of the great Queen Ninsun,  
came into the presence of the goddess, his mother.

GILGAMEŠ

O Ninsun, I have made so bold as to travel  
the distant path to Humbaba.  
I shall face a battle that I do not know,  
I shall ride a road that I do not know.  
I beseech you, give me your blessing, that I may depart,  
that I may safely see your face again,  
and come glad at heart through the gate of Uruk!

NARRATOR

Ninsun listened in sorrow  
to the words of Gilgameš, her son, and of Enkidu.  
Seven times she went into the bath-house,  
she bathed herself in water fragrant with tamarisk,  
she dressed in her finest robe, a splendid garment,  
She hastened up the staircase, she climbed on to the roof,  
and set up a censer before Šamaš,  
She scattered incense before Šamaš, and raised her arms.

NINSUN

Why did you assign to Gilgameš, my son, a spirit of unrest?  
For now you have chafed him,  
and he will travel the distant path to Humbaba.  
He will face a battle that he does not know,  
he will ride a road that he does not know.  
During the days that he journeys there and back,  
until he reaches the Forest of Cedar,  
until he slays ferocious Humbaba  
and casts out from the land the Evil Thing you hate,  
watch him by day and guard him by night!

O Šamaš, on the day that Gilgameš and Enkidu  
come face to face with Humbaba,  
send forth against Humbaba the great winds of the storm:  
South Wind, North Wind, East Wind, West Wind;  
Blast, Counterblast,  
Gale, Tempest, Typhoon, Hell-Wind,  
Icy Blast, Hurricane, Tornado.  
Let the Thirteen Winds rise to the attack,  
so that the face of Humbaba grows dark,  
and the weapon of Gilgameš may slay him!

NARRATOR

After Ninsun had entreated Šamaš,  
she summoned Enkidu to declare her resolution.



NINSUN

O mighty Enkidu, you are not the offspring of my womb,  
but now your brethren shall be the votaries of Gilgameš,  
the priestesses and serving-maids of the temple.

NARRATOR

She placed amulets around Enkidu's neck.

NINSUN

The priestesses hereby take in the foundling,  
and the Divine Daughters will bring up the foster-child.  
I hereby adopt Enkidu, whom I love, as a son;  
let Gilgameš in brotherhood treat Enkidu with favour!

NARRATOR

At twenty leagues they broke bread,  
at thirty leagues they pitched camp:  
fifty leagues they travelled in the course of a day.  
By the third day they had laid behind them  
a march of a month and a half,  
and were drawing near Mount Lebanon.

They paused to marvel at the forest,  
observing the height of the cedars,  
observing the path into the wood.  
Where Humbaba came and went there was a track,  
the paths were firm and clear,  
well trodden was the way.  
They gazed at the Cedar Mountain,  
the dwelling of the gods,  
the dais for the goddesses' throne;  
On the very face of the mountain  
the cedar put forth its abundance,  
sweet was its shade, full of delight.  
The thorny undergrowth was snarled,  
the forest was a thick canopy.  
Humbaba opened his mouth to speak,  
saying to Gilgameš:

HUMBABA

Let fools, Gilgameš, take advice from a simpleton!  
Why have you come into my presence here?  
Come, Enkidu, spawn of a fish,  
who knew not his father,  
hatchling of terrapin and turtle,  
who sucked not the milk of his mother!  
When you were young I watched you but came not near;  
you were too scrawny for my belly.  
Why do you bring Gilgameš before me in treachery,  
and take your stand here like an enemy?  
I will slit Gilgameš's gullet and throat,  
I will feed his flesh to the Locust birds,  
the ravening eagles and vultures!

NARRATOR

White cloud was turned to black,  
death poured down upon them like a mist.  
Then Šamaš roused against Humbaba the mighty winds:  
South Wind, North Wind,  
East Wind, West Wind,  
Blast, Counterblast,  
Gale, Tempest,  
Typhoon, Hell-Wind.  
The Thirteen winds rose to the attack,  
and the face of Humbaba grew dark.  
Forward he could not charge,  
nor could he retreat.  
Then the weapons of Gilgameš closed round Humbaba.  
Pleading for life, Humbaba said to Gilgameš:

HUMBABA

O Gilgameš, spare my life and I will be your slave,  
Let me dwell here in serfdom as your thrall!  
Cedar trees will I give you, as many as you command,  
timber, the pride of a palace, shall be yours.

O Enkidu, you who are well versed in the ways of my forest,  
you who also know the best things to say:  
If only I had picked you up  
and hanged you from a sapling at the gate of my forest;  
if only I had fed your flesh to the Locust birds,  
the ravening eagles and vultures.  
But now, Enkidu, my deliverance rests with you:  
speak to Gilgameš that he may spare my life.

NARRATOR

Enkidu opened his mouth to speak,  
saying to Gilgameš:

ENKIDU

My friend — this Humbaba, this guardian of the Cedar Forest,  
finish him, slay him, do away with his power!  
Humbaba, guardian of the Cedar Forest,  
finish him, slay him, do away with his power,  
before it comes to the ears of Enlil, the chief of the gods!

NARRATOR

Gilgameš heard the words of his friend,  
he drew forth the dagger at his side.  
Gilgameš stabbed him in the neck;  
Enkidu disembowelled him and ripped out his lungs.

## Scene Three

### Ištar and the Bull of Heaven

*(Tablet VI, 1-21; 42-44; 51-53; 64-100; 113-26; 141-57)*

NARRATOR

Gilgameš washed his matted hair, he cleaned his war gear,  
he shook his locks down over his back.  
He cast aside his filthy clothes,  
he arrayed himself in clean garments,  
He wrapped himself in cloaks, tied with a sash.  
Gilgameš put on his crown.  
Ištar, Lady of Heaven, looked in lust on the beauty of Gilgameš.

IŠTAR

Come, Gilgameš, you shall be my bridegroom!  
I charge you to give me your fruits.  
You shall be my husband and I will be your wife!  
Let me harness for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold,  
with wheels of gold and horns of amber,  
drawn by storm-lions like giant mules.  
Come into my house bearing the aroma of cedar!  
When you come into my house,  
doorway and throne shall kiss your feet.  
Kings, courtiers and nobles  
shall prostrate themselves before you,  
and bring you in tribute the produce of mountain and plain.  
Your nanny-goats shall bear triplets  
and your ewes shall bear twins.  
Your pack-donkeys shall outpace a mule;  
at the chariot your horse shall gallop in majesty;  
at the yoke your ox shall have no rival.

GILGAMEŠ

What bridegroom of yours did you love for ever?  
Come, let me count the numbers of your lovers.  
You loved the lion, matchless in strength:  
seven and seven pits have you dug for him.  
You loved the horse, courageous in battle:  
to him you have assigned whip, spurs and lash;  
to him you have assigned a ride of seven leagues,  
muddy water have you given him to drink.  
You loved Išullānu, your father's gardener,  
who every day brought you a basket of dates,  
daily making your table gleam.  
You eyed him and you came close:  
"O my Išullānu, let us taste your rod!  
Put out your hand and stroke my quim!"  
Išullānu replied:  
"Me! What do you want of me?  
Do I not have home-baked bread?  
The bread you offer me is putrid and mouldy!"

Do I not have a blanket against the cold?  
What you offer is a cover of rushes!”  
You heard what Išullānu had to say:  
you struck him, you turned him into a dwarf.  
And you would love me and curse me  
just as you did to them.

NARRATOR

When Ištar heard this,  
she was enraged and flew up to heaven.  
Shrieking she went before her father, Anu,  
weeping before Antu, her mother.

IŠTAR

Father, Gilgameš has defamed me.  
Gilgameš hurled many insults at me,  
things that insult and revile me.

NARRATOR

Anu opened his mouth to speak,  
saying to the lady Ištar:

ANU

Ah, but did you not provoke King Gilgameš?  
that is why he hurled insults at you,  
things that insult and revile you.

NARRATOR

Ištar opened her mouth to speak,  
saying to her father, Anu:

IŠTAR

Father, give me, I pray, the Bull of Heaven,  
that I may slay Gilgameš in his dwelling.  
If you will not give me the Bull of Heaven,  
I shall destroy the underworld together with its dwelling-place,  
I shall raze the nether regions to the ground.  
I shall bring up the dead to consume the living,  
so the living will be outnumbered by the dead.

NARRATOR

On hearing this speech of Ištar,  
Anu placed in her hands the nose-rope of the Bull of Heaven.  
Ištar led it down to earth.  
When it reached the land of Uruk,  
it dried up woodland, marshland and reeds.  
When it went down to the river,  
the water fell by seven cubits.  
When it snorted, a pit yawned open,  
and a hundred men of Uruk all fell in.  
At its second snort a pit gaped open,  
two hundred men of Uruk all fell in.  
At its third snort a pit yawned open,  
and Enkidu fell in up to his waist.  
Enkidu sprang out and seized the Bull by its horns;  
the Bull spat slaver in his face.

Enkidu circled round behind the Bull of Heaven,  
he seized it by the tuft of its tail.  
He set his foot on the back of its hock,  
and forced it to kneel.  
Then Gilgameš, like a butcher brave and skilful,  
pressed home his knife at slaughter-spot,  
between the neck and the horns.  
After they had slain the Bull of Heaven,  
they tore out its heart and offered it to Šamaš.  
They stepped back and did obeisance before Šamaš;  
then the two of them sat down together.

Ištar went up on the wall of Uruk, the Sheepfold,  
she trampled and stamped,  
she uttered a wailing lament.

IŠTAR

Woe to Gilgameš, who vilified me,  
who slaughtered the Bull of Heaven!

NARRATOR

Enkidu heard this speech of Ištar,  
he tore a haunch off the Bull and hurled it at her.

ENKIDU

You too, if only I could catch you, I would treat you like this!  
I would drape its guts on your arms!

## Scene Four

### The Death of Enkidu

(Tablet VII, 164-77; 182-97; Tablet VIII, 52-64)

NARRATOR

*Days passed, and Gilgameš spoke to Enkidu.*

*Gilgameš said: "My friend, why do you groan and curse?"*

Enkidu told his friend the trouble on his mind:

ENKIDU

Portentous, my friend, was the dream

I saw in the course of this night!

The heavens thundered, the earth made answer,  
and there I stood between them.

There was a man, his countenance was grim,  
his face was like that of an Anzû-bird.

His hands were the paws of a lion,  
his claws an eagle's talons.

He seized me by the hair,  
and was too strong for me.

When I struck him, he sprang back like a skipping-rope,  
he struck me and capsized me like a raft.

He trampled over me like a wild bull,  
and filled my body with poison.

"Gilgameš, my friend, save me!", I cried.

But you were afraid of him and did not come.

He made me weak as a dove;

he bound my arms like the wings of a bird,

to lead me captive to the house of darkness,

to the house which none who enter can ever leave,  
on the journey that none can retrace;

to the house whose inmates are starved of light,  
where dust is their food, and clay their sustenance.

They are clad like birds in coats of feathers;  
they cannot see light but squat in darkness.

On the door and the bolt the dust lies thick;  
on the House of Dust a deathly quiet is poured.

I looked on the House of Dust as I entered,  
and saw there a ~~steek~~-pile of crowns.

There sat kings, the crowned heads

who had ruled the land since the days of old,

who used to serve roasted meat at the tables of Anu and Enlil,

who used to serve baked bread, and to pour chilled water from skins.

GILGAMEŠ

O Enkidu, my friend, galloping mule,

donkey of the uplands, panther of the wild,

we two it was who joined forces and climbed the uplands,

who seized the Bull of Heaven and slew it there,

who destroyed Humbaba,

the mighty king of the Cedar Forest.

What is this sleep that has mastered you?  
You lie there senseless and cannot hear me!

NARRATOR

But Enkidu, he would not lift his head.  
Gilgameš felt his heart, it was beating no longer.  
He covered his friend,  
    veiling his face like a bride.  
Circling around him like an eagle.  
    like a lioness deprived of her cubs,  
    he turned and turned about, this way and that.  
He tore out his curly tresses  
    and let them fall in a heap,  
tore off his finery  
    and cast it away, as if it were accursed.  
Then Gilgameš sat down and wept;  
    tears streaked his face.  
And he mourned for Enkidu,  
    the double of his heart.

**Finis**